

## Imaginative Gridlock and the Spirit of Adventure

"It is safest for ships in the harbour but that's not why ships are built"

Anonymous

Which woman do you see?



## 15<sup>th</sup> Century Europe: A Stuck System

- Nuremberg Chronicle 1493 – a civilization mired in depression and anxiety
- The miracle of the next 500 years: what brings the change?
- Friedman's answer: the bold new explorers who "break" the emotional barriers that fog the possibilities

## More Data or Imagination?

- Trying harder, finding better answers to the same questions won't release the creative imagination to envision new opportunities / paradigms
- What is needed is not new answers to the old questions but new questions
- "When a system reaches that point, it can only get unstuck, that is experience a renaissance, when it can bring forth leaders who can separate themselves enough from the emotional processes around them so that they can see things differently, who are hell-bent to pursue their vision, who can persist in the face of the sabotage of others..., who are challenged where others are made anxious, and who value adventure more than safety."

## Our Present State

- In the church today we are in a similar place to Europe at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century: paralyzed by negativity / doubt, our future seems bleak
  - Hemorrhaging faith: we are losing 2 of 3 youth to church / half of those to faith. Their reasons: hypocrisy, judgment, exclusivity, failure
  - Societal distrust of organized religion / culture of suspicion
  - Our members either aging or unavailable
  - Unlimited entertainment options to dull pain / distract
- Focus on negativity (critical analysis) produces emotional climate of hopelessness

## Thermometers or Thermostats?

- Will our anxiety be regulated by hope and faith or will we absorb the anxious state of our surrounding culture?
  - Brueggemann - "...must be informed by the reality of the world, but... unfettered by the world's fearfulness and anxiety."
- Non-anxious presence – only possible through hope and faith
  - Hebrews 11:1 - "To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see."
  - Hope as an anchor (1 Heb. 6:19) – what we hope for we will seek

## Re-kindling Our Hope

- Perhaps our way forward may come more from cultivating this soil of creative, Spirit-inspired imagination and adventure than by fine-tuning our present answers to old questions
- If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.  
- Antoine de Saint Exupery

## Matt. 21:1-8

- At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. <sup>3</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath."

## Matt. 21:1-8

- <sup>4</sup>He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? <sup>5</sup>He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. <sup>6</sup>Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent?"

## Matt. 21:1-8

- <sup>6</sup>I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. <sup>7</sup>If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. <sup>8</sup>For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

## Unpacking the Story

- Interaction – like media on election campaign
  - Jesus' response - he wants to establish his authority to determine how Sabbath is to serve in the overall breaking in of heaven to earth
  - The passage he chooses (1 Sam. 21) ups ante
    - Parallel to David (anointed but not yet enthroned)
  - As temple overrides Sabbath so he and his mission replaces the temple

## Entering The Story

- Ways to approach:
  - Analytic versus Meditative
- Who do you want to be in the story?
- What about the Pharisees?
  - Zealous, popular, non-elite, prophetic, embracing of both written / oral law)
  - They longed for heaven to come to earth and saw the law as a gift to that end.
  - Yet in their zeal to preserve tradition (life), they lost sight of the trajectory of God's story culminating in Jesus

## What's Happening Today?

- Times of great change lie ahead for the church in the western world
  - Nominalism is collapsing
  - The church will be smaller but much more committed
- These younger, passionate followers of Jesus will need to discern how to bring the presence of Jesus into a vastly different context
  - Our 'temples' (traditions / interpretations, contextualizations of what it means to follow him) will be challenged (new wineskins: how does story go / what does church look like)
  - We will need many Acts 15 conversations!

## Keeping Jesus At the Center

- Our great challenge in the coming years will be having the discernment to know how to keep Jesus at the center of our story and to know what / when to preserve / discard
- For those of us who are older: we are the "guardians" of traditions that have brought life yet we must constantly distinguish between wine and wineskins
- For those younger: we need to know the difference between being a thermometer and a thermostat

## One Certainty...

- We can't do it alone – only together can we navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities that lay before us!